

9/20/07

To: CINMS Advisory Council

From: Linda Krop, Chair, Conservation Working Group

Re: Conservation Working Group Report

The Conservation Working Group (CWG) met on September 19, 2007.

Members present: Linda Krop, Chair (EDC), Greg Helms, Vice Chair (The Ocean Conservancy); Shiva Polefka (EDC); Jean Holmes (LWVSB), and Jessica Altstatt (SBCK).

CINMS staff present: Mike Murray.

Public members present Gail Osherenko.

I. INTRODUCTIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. Shiva announced that he attended a SeaGrant workshop yesterday regarding west coast regional governance on ocean issues. There was an interesting discussion regarding ecosystem management.
- B. Greg Helms announced that two blue whales have died recently, apparently from ship strikes.

II. FEDERAL MARINE RESERVES

Mike provided an update and pointed out that the CINMS has published new maps to indicate the addition of the reserves in the federal waters portion of the Sanctuary. The CA Fish and Game Commission held two hearings on the issue of filling the gaps; the third and final hearing is scheduled for October 11 or 12 in Concord. The SAC and conservation community continue to advocate for expedited processing by the Fish and Game Commission.

Mike also announced that a new Research Coordinator has been hired – Stephen Katz.

Finally, Mike informed us that the Social Science Plan for socioeconomic research and monitoring has been approved.

III. MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mike advised us that the CINMS is still waiting for final clearance of the Supplemental EIS.

IV. SAC MEETING AGENDA FOR 9/21

There are a couple items on the SAC meeting agenda regarding water quality. The final sub-item includes a request for input regarding next steps for the CINMS and SAC. The CWG took this opportunity to review the recommendations from the 2005 SAC-approved water quality report. Mike reviewed the recommendations and provided updates regarding the CINMS' progress in these areas. It appears as though the CINMS has devoted most of its efforts towards research and monitoring, with less focus on jurisdictional and policy issues, or public education and outreach. Part of the reason for this focus is due to the fact that some of the policy and education targets won't be known until more research is conducted and the CINMS develops a more detailed water quality plan. Mike offered to provide notes on the SAC report recommendations and to bring this information to the SAC meeting.

V. OTHER ISSUES

- A. **Clearwater Port LNG Project:** LNG is listed on the SAC's work plan as an issue of importance. Linda acknowledged Sean Hastings' email regarding the Coast Guard's Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Shiva handed out a fact sheet that EDC prepared at the request of some community groups in Oxnard, who were interested in potential impacts to marine life in the Santa Barbara Channel. He also handed out a map showing where the proposed terminal would be located (on Platform Grace) and the LNG ship routes, in relation to the CINMS. We discussed the role of the CINMS in the consultation process for the project. Mike explained that the CINMS would be included in the consultation with NOAA.

We discussed the benefit of scheduling a SAC agenda item to learn more about the project, and to provide input to the CINMS Superintendent regarding the CINMS' role and potential issues facing the Sanctuary. Based on the close proximity of the terminal to the Sanctuary, and the fact that the LNG tankers will travel through Sanctuary waters, we recommend that the SAC invite a panel of agency representatives to educate us regarding the review process for the project. We identified the U.S. Coast Guard (federal lead agency), CA State Lands Commission (state lead agency) and CA Coastal Commission (consistency review agency) as potential panel members.

We pointed out that it would be useful for the CINMS to take an active role in responding to this proposal. For one, the CINMS could provide marine life sighting data. We also thought it would be a good idea for the CINMS to conduct its own independent assessment of potential impacts to Sanctuary resources. We noted several potential impacts to assess, including impacts to marine wildlife (from noise, lighting, ship strikes,

ballast intake, etc.), public safety, air quality, and greenhouse gas emissions.

- B. **Artificial Reefs**: Linda and Mike reported that the SAC may receive a request to place an item on a future SAC agenda regarding artificial reefs. We agreed that we need more information regarding the link to the CINMS; we noted that this issue is listed on the SAC work plan.

- C. **Red Abalone Fishery at San Miguel Island**: Jessie Altstatt (SB Channelkeeper) gave a presentation regarding the San Miguel Island Abalone Advisory Group, of which she is a conservation/non-consumptive participant. She reminded us that the Southern California red abalone fishery has been closed for 10 years. An Abalone Recovery and Management Plan (ARMP) was adopted by the CA Department of Fish and Game; this Plan includes performance standards that have not yet been met. However, there is an exception in the Plan for consideration of limited fisheries in small areas. The Advisory Group will provide a range of recommendations to DFG regarding potential allocation, regulations and management for a limited fishery. Surveys were conducted at San Miguel Island in 2006 and 2007; abalone distribution is patchy and overall density levels are not very high when compared to standards in the ARMP (note: there is considerable discussion about whether the standards are appropriate). A scientist has been hired to model scenarios to ascertain potential Total Allowable Catch (TAC); such modeling must take into account warm water years and the potential for mortality due to Withering Syndrome disease (over half the abalone sampled test positive for WS). Unfortunately, the Department does not have funding to implement much of the Recovery Plan or to enforce existing regulations; and the costs of a new fishery are unknown. Jessie offered a proposal to test the TAC experimentally before opening a consumptive fishery; the precautionary plan calls for paying commercial fishermen to help harvest and translocate abalone to create new population centers at other islands. This allocation option appears to have support from National Park Service and National Marine Fisheries Service representatives on the AAG. Funding for the proposal could come from foundation grants and agency partnerships. Information regarding this issue is available on the Department's website.